

LESKERNICK CAIRN 5 1997 SITE DIARY

DAY ① 25/5/97

Weather: Hot + sunny | On site: Helen + Justin

Saw the cairn for the 1st time - tasty! Everybody seemed overcome with affection for this "dinky little site". Immediately apparent that the site is too small + stoney for conventional "offset quadrat with baulks" method - have decided to opt for simply quartering the mound since baulks are clearly quite unfeasible. After customary introductory tour

Justin began planning the mound with turf still in place - also took photos of cairn from each of the cardinal points in B+W and colour. Once enough of the site was planned ~~to~~ I began de-turfing trying to keep a little behind the rate at which Justin's drawing could proceed. Plan looks very good: - clear, accurate, careful.

Tomorrow I hope to complete removal of turf and begin clean up for pre-ex photo + plan.

which

for pr

TODAY A

LC597 DAY(2) 26/5/97

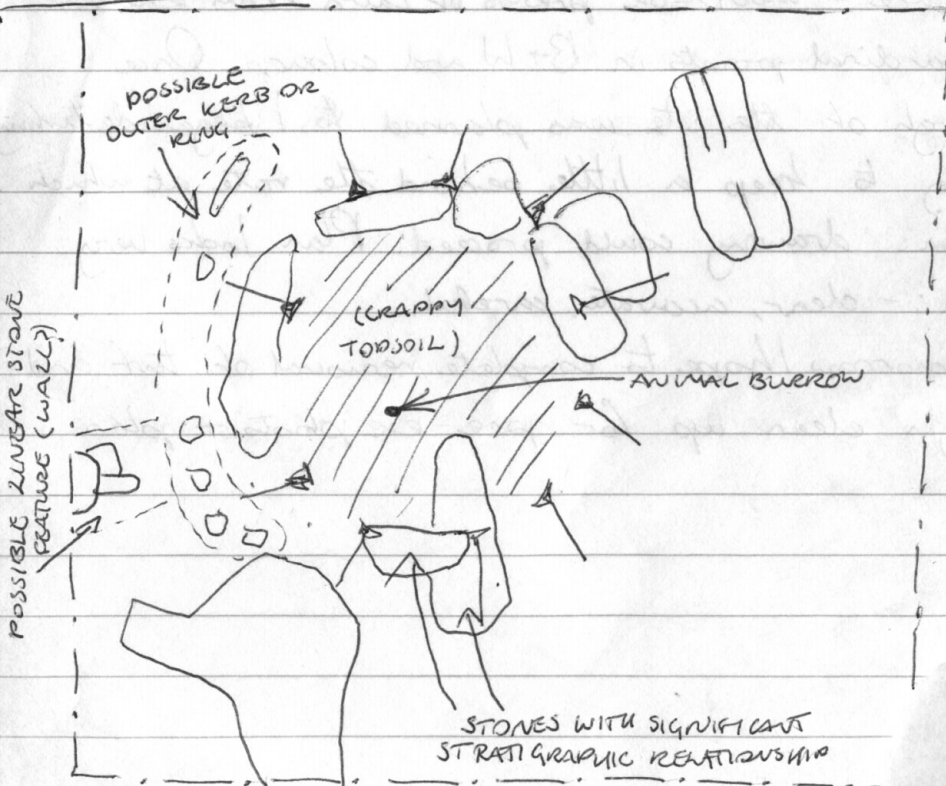
On site = Helen, Justin (am.) Mike (pm.) Sue (pm.)

Weather - another lovely hot + sunny day.

Continued deturking. Justin finished plan just before lunch break. Now working to hours which means on site by 9.00, Teabreak 11.00 (15 mins) lunch 1.00 (45 mins) Teabreak 3.15 (15 mins) Offsite = 5.30 (ON THE DOT!)

After lunch Mike + I deturked until area completely cleared (Mike left shortly before this to make notes) After turf removed site as below;

SKETCH PLAN 1



Mike and I discussed these (very tentative) "ideas for features" - (the site has not been cleared yet!) He was doubtful about the wall ^(and initially about the "kerb") but pointed out a longstone which ^{is} ~~appears~~ out of alignment with the rest of the cairn (see sketch plan) it's possible that this was once standing and has fallen onto the cairn. Interestingly it is overlain by a cairn stone which ~~does~~ seem to form part of the cairn arrangement. This could be important from point of view of strat.

A great many more such relationships are to be expected, there is potential for a quite complicated sequence. Site looks more like a platform cairn ^{than a} ~~log~~ log-shaped cairn - but needs to be dug to tell!

Hole in the top of the cairn at first believed to be ~~a~~ the result of the settlement survey team hammering flags into the site in earlier seasons now seems to be an animal burrow (fortunately we are not to blame!)

Tomorrow - remove rooty material from top of cairn. Enlist more workers for big clean up which should be finished by end of day in time for pre-ex photos (I hope)

TODAY LC597 LIKES = Earthworms

LC597 DAY ③ 27/5/97

On site = Heles, ~~Heles~~, Mike, Gary.

Weather = cloudy, windy but warm.

Today's diary written by = Heles + Mike.

Finished clearing cairn and took photos of site from N, S, E and W.

Had lengthy conversations about Radio 4 and about families. Gary is fanatical Radio 4 fan, he is not embarrassed about this, Mike + I are Radio 4 fans but I think we are rather embarrassed.

No not embarrassed merely interested & something other than Nigel Pergeter et al. some of the time! I think that to spend a day clearing a trench without something jolly to talk about would be too boring for anyone to contemplate. Just as long as you know when it's time to crack on & get the job done. Anyway it is good to talk [Bob Hookins 1995].

TODAY LC597 LIKES; The Archer's

TODAY LC597 HATES; Shula Hobden, Sue Lawley
Alan Clark, Jennifer Murray

LC597 DAY ④ 28/5/97

On site = Justin (all day) Heles (after pm tea)

Weather = sunny but north-east wind was very chilly

Today's diary written by = Heles

Justin planned all day so no excavation was possible until he had planned the area concerned.

I worked in Chris' trench 'till after teabreak. I had asked Justin to plan one quarter first so that I could begin work whilst he was planning after teabreak one quarter plus was finished so I set out the four section strings which bisect the excavation and will structure our future activities. I began to remove some of the dark, rooty, and very organic material that occupies the centre of the cairn, ^{context ②} - it looks more + more likely that this deposit is the in fill of a robbing pit - oh dear! Still, we don't know till we dig it!

Tomorrow; Put levels + co-ordinates on plan + on grid pegs. Continue removing context ②

TODAY LC597 LIKES = Windlarns + power station
cooling towers

LC597 DAY (5) 29/5/97

On site = Justin + Heler, Stuart (from lunch to tea).

Weather = sunny with fresh, strong, breeze.

Today's diary written by Heler.

Justin continued planning, I removed ~~the~~ context (2) in S/W quarter. This material is loose + rooty with gaps under some of the stones - it contains stones of a size that Mike (S.-T.) would call "small boulders". The whole thing looks more + more like a robbing pit - the stones in context (2) do not form any "structure" - they appear to have been disturbed. After lunch I got Stuart to start removing the N/E quarter - similar story. One of the cairn stones had slumped over context (2) and I had to remove it (possible candidate for "structural stone sheet" or maybe just note this on the context form). The "quarter method" no longer seems viable for the cairn: - rather than consisting of lots of smallish stones neatly stacked the cairn is built from a number of large stones awkwardly piled - this means the excavation of distinct quarters would be a

recording nightmare with the odd stone shifted within each quarter + most remaining in section. The only logical approach is area excavation - taking off the cairn stones according to the sequence of their construction context by context. Whether we had opted for area excavation initially or not, quartering context (2) would still have been the correct way to proceed. The spoil from excavation of context (2) has been kept separate in case we want to sieve it but this seems pointless - the material seems completely devoid of finds, (as usual!).

~~The idea that the cairn has been robbed is called back into my mind as an apparently inconsequential aspect of the cairn's make up prior to excavation. Before we removed the turf there was a small stone placed which had been placed~~

LC597 DAY (6) 30/5/97

On site = Helen + Gary

Weather = sunny with annoying easterly breeze.
Today's diary written by = Helen

One of those days in which nothing seemed straightforward! I was back and forth between trenches in search of equipment all day - however the necessary tasks were all accomplished without mishap.

• Sections through context (2) were photographed and then drawn by myself + Gary.

Then we began removing the remaining quarters of (2) in accordance with the new "area excavation" methods. The whole of the material was removed revealing a muddle of what appear to be disturbed stones underneath. However one large flat central slab may have once formed a capstone - and even may yet prove to be a capstone.

The sections 2 → 5 were drawn on graph paper because no planning boards were available - I will transfer

them to perambulate tonight.

LC597 DAY (7) 31/5/97

Day off!

LC597 DAY (8) 1/6/97

On site - Helen (morning only)

Weather - sunny with strong chill breeze.

Today's diary written by Helen.

Ceri + I cleared up the cairn for pre-ex photos of context (3) in morning before tea break. Took photos in B+W + colour from N, S, E. and W.

I have discovered that the direction I have been taking for ~~the~~ North is actually West. Today I changed the recording sheets to rectifying this mistake.

Further thoughts about context (2) - this context does not now appear to be a robbing pit; that is to say - it might be a robbing pit but several factors mitigate against this conclusion;

- (i) If it is a robbing pit where is the upcast? - one would expect greater disturbance of the stones + mounds of dug out material
- (ii) The ~~dark~~ material is not contained in a cut feature - where is the cut of the pit?

~~The~~ The material consists of silt with relatively few inclusions of "granitic" grit. It resembles a washed deposit. ~~that~~ The question is how did the hole come to exist?

Sue came up with a good theory - perhaps the cairn originally contained an empty space - rather like a leist - which was ~~enclosed~~ enclosed by the large flatish slab which I am tentatively treating as a capstone. This space may have collapsed leaving a "caved-in" area in the centre of the cairn that subsequently was infilled with black peaty humic material.

(2) is planned on Sheet C, Drawing no. 7. Levels in level Book and on plan.

Another hypothesis is that context (2) represents turf infill which has decayed to produce black silty material resembling the upper part of buried soil profiles that have been found elsewhere at Liskernick. If so, the area around the cairn must have been de-turfed prior to its construction.

LC597 DAY (9) 2/6/97

On site - Jane + Helen, Gary + Mike.

Weather - Rainy + cold.

Today's diary written by - Helen.

This morning Jane planned context (3). Then Gary + I took some levels and Mike + Gary + I removed (3). Surprisingly easy to move the stones - Gary is very good at manoeuvring them. We moved the whole context in the period between lunch and afternoon teabreak. This set me thinking about the time it may have taken to construct the cairn - possibly the labour investment was very ~~high~~ little. Cairns may have been constructed by a small number of people - a kin-group say - in a short period of time. In future I shall time the ~~length~~ of our stone moving activities.

Left site early because of the rain.

Context (3) is planned on Sheet D, Drawing No. 7.

LC597 DAY (10) 3/6/97

On site - Helen, Old Chris, Gary, Ceri (am)
Jane (pm)

Weather - Cold with occasional showers

Today's diary written by; Helen.

Late start today due to inclement weather. Old Chris, Gary, Ceri and I cleared cairn ~~at site~~ following removal of (3), for pre-ex of context (4). (4) consists of next layer of stones to be removed. Photographs were taken of cairn in B+W + colour from all four cardinal directions.

~~As~~ I observed that the film counter on the colour camera had returned to 0 ^{on the colour camera} before taking the colour shots. This made me think that the back of the camera must have come open as the cameras were in transit to site in the back of my ruck-sack (not the best means by which to transport them onto site but the only one available - they have been wrapped in a plastic bag, ^{under} a layer of fabric, and then another plastic bag). After noticing this I then took a

12/20/77
further set of colour photographs just in case the ones I had taken had been obliterated - There are a further 5 exposures left on this film (Film No. 4) which must be developed as soon as possible to see if there is a problem.

Following the photography Jane planned the whole site on Sheet E, Drawing 8.

Sue and I had a discussion about planning and the final graphic content of the site report. She is very keen to have a section in the report for the simple reason that this is the conventional ~~illustration~~ illustration that appears in most excavation reports and a section would

- Validate the procedures ^{we have} undertaken here and thus add credibility to the project.
- Show the relationships between the different contexts on site in an ~~instantly~~ instantly recognisable and hence

more readily comprehensible format. A section would "speak the common language of archaeologists", as it were, and thereby facilitate the use of the report to other workers in the field.

These are very good reasons to have a section drawing but short of taking a circular saw to the site I do not see how a section can ~~be~~ be easily achieved on the ground. This means the area excavation must be more carefully geared to recording the different heights and slopes of individual stones so that a section may be reconstructed using plans at the post-excavation stage. ~~Taking~~ Taking levels at both the "top" and "bottom" of tilting stones, (as we have been doing) ~~will~~ will make this process easier. I have also asked Jane to indicate the direction of slope on the stones on the plan using an arrow pointing in the direction

of the downward slope. ~~The~~ The break of slope on the stones should be shown on the plan using a hard line.

It might also be interesting if the site report also experimented with alternative ways of representing the cairn which are more suited to it's awkward and ~~haphazard~~ seemingly haphazard construction. For instance the ~~var~~ different courses of the structure could be shown in a diagram that built up the cairn as a series of "over-lays" in plan.

~~The difference in~~ The slope of the stones could be shown by differences in the density of stippling - different densities could be graded according to quantifiable differences in height derived from the levels we have taken.

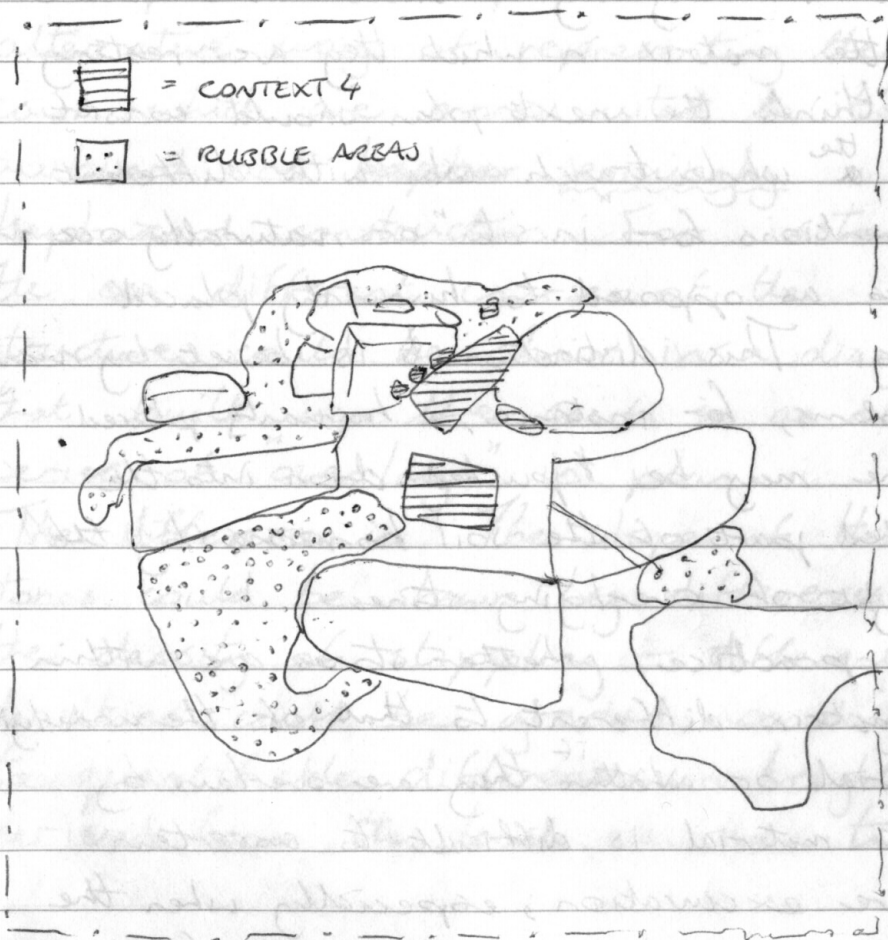
LC597 Day ① 4/6/97
On the 4th June 1997
Today's diary written in the
huts

Following the removal of context ④ there are areas of rubble abutting some of the "in-situ" stones that form the basis of the cairn structure - these areas of rubble need investigating to discover the nature of the matrix in which they are resting.

I think the next plan should consist of ^{the} ~~a~~ whole trench with different conventions for "in situ" or naturally occurring stones as opposed to humanly placed stones. This distinction is beset by many problems, for instance, a humanly placed stone may be pushed down into the leached part of the soil horizon by the weight of overlying stones.

In practice, whether stones are within a matrix different to that of the underlying material or ~~whether~~ ^{if} they are overlain by that material is difficult to ascertain before excavation; especially when the matrix in which stones may be laid so

closely resembles the topsoil. One must beware of "clearing away" the evidence, around stones such as ~~these~~ those in these rubble patches.



LC597 Day (11) 4/6/97

On site - Heler, Gary + Ciri.
Today's diary written by Heler.

Weather - sunny with occasional clouds

This morning began clearing by taking levels on (4) - then removed it. After this Ciri and Gary cleared up for pre-ex photo of (5) - which is the next course of stones to be removed. After clear up photos were taken in B+W and colour. Colour film No. 4 was finished and Colour film 5 began.

Film No. 4 is the film which has possibly lost some pictures due to the camera back coming open.

Tomorrow - ~~remove~~ * Get Jane to plan (5) then remove. Also clear up rubble deposits for pre-ex photo + plan stones underlying (5). Taking exploratory spots ~~th~~ of the "Exploratory" ~~th~~ stuff on top of the site reveals that the rubble patches are much more extensive than originally thought. I think ~~th~~ this material on top of the rubble

LC597 Day (12) 5/6/97
Weather - rainy + cold.

Mike the Anthropologist this morning^(plaintively)
"It's a long way to go just to move
some stones." - Big girls blouse!

When we got to Westmoregate the weather
was so bad it was decided that ~~the~~ working
in the trenches would damage the deposits
so ~~we~~ we adjourned to a Cannelford coffee
shop and then back to the campsite to
get on with some paperwork.

I am beginning to reach a deeper
understanding of the sequence of cairn
construction + think! Several distinct phases
of construction ~~are~~ are becoming apparent.

These can be summarised thus:

- (i) The natural "grounders" around which the
cairn location was decided
- (ii) A rubble platform
- (iii) The capstone + the turf stack
- (iv) Several courses of stone structures

constructed around the turf stack.

LC597 Day (14) 7/6/97

Weather = Rainy + cold

On Site = Gary + Mike + Helen

Tried to move (5) - moved most northerly boulder + rest of context except for largest boulder - decided to leave this for ^{tomorrow} ~~a day~~ when we could bring fence posts etc.

Also removed context (6) - this consisted of a couple of stones which had been skewed in around (5) and were therefore later than (5) in the sequence.

(4)
|
(6)
|
(5)

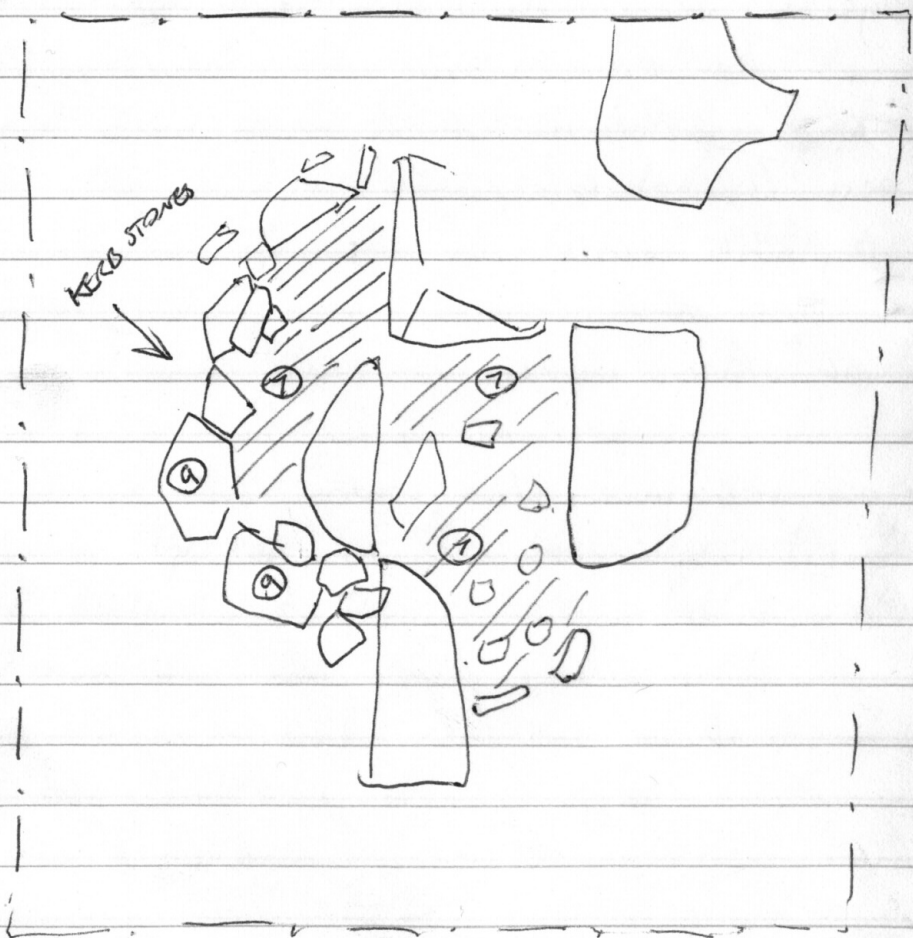
Matrix therefore runs

Spent the rest of the day uncovering the full extent of the rubble platform ~~which~~
P man

LC597 Day (16) 9/6/97
Weather = Mist, showers.

On Site = Gary, Helen, Dan + Steve (morning)
Helen + Gary (p.m.)

This morning I cleaned up context ⑨ which is the first context of the kerb of stones on the western side of the cairn.



This afternoon Gary + I went to look at some of the other cairns on site and to think about the cairn in the landscape.

* * *
Context ⑨ appears to be overlain by a "make-up layer" of rubble within a slightly darker much siltier deposit. ~~there~~. The full extent of this layer needs to be determined by clearing. ~~However~~ This layer (or more correctly "fill" since it seems to be contained within the kerb stones) includes the piece of slate, which for this context is different to the rubble plate.

I now recognise this context as something different to the "rubble platform". If the slate is not within the platform this removes one of the factors that led me to interpret it as a platform in the first place - perhaps it is natural after all!

LC597 Day (17) 10/6/97

Weather = Cloudy + rainy

On site = Helen, Sue, Justin

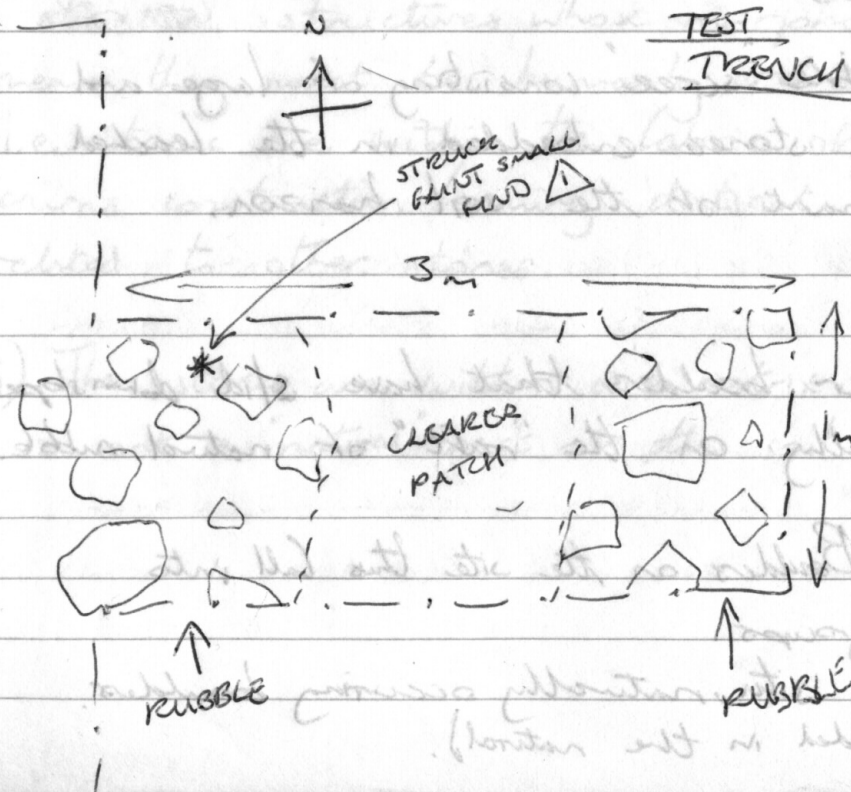
Justin planned all day.

Mike dug a soil pit yesterday and discovered a stoney layer resembling our "rubble platform" - this has led me to have doubts over the humanly-made nature of the platform. To resolve this question I have opened a 3m x 1m trench from the eastern edge of the excavation. The rationale behind this was that a trench of these dimensions would;

- (i) Allow me to decide if the rubble was natural or artificially laid
- (ii) If the rubble ~~is~~ was humanly constructed it would uncover its extent where it extends out of the trench edges.

Sue and I worked on this trench all day until we were rained off at 5pm. The trench was matted down to the level of the stoney

layer at which point the trench was cleared and a careful assessment of the positioning of rubble was made - the stones appear at the interface between as well as within the brownier gritty layer beneath the sub soil. This material comprises the leached part of the soil horizon. The stones appear to be a naturally occurring component of this horizon.



20597 Day 17 10/6/97
Weather = Cloudy + rainy

The stoney layer is a naturally formed scree which has rolled down the hill slope.

The geomorphological processes which have led to the natural emplacement of stones on the site prior to the cairns construction can be grouped into 3 main types;

- (i) In situ boulders based in the orangey natural ~~soil~~ beneath the iron pan
- (ii) Rubble "scree" consisting of large and small stones embedded in the leached component of the soil horizon.
- (iii) Larger boulders that have slid down slope naturally on the "raft" of natural rubble.

~~These~~ Boulders on the site thus fall into three groups

- ① In situ, naturally occurring boulders (embedded in the natural).

- ② Boulders arriving on site through natural processes (embedded in the ~~leached~~ ^{other} parts of the soil profile).

- ③ Boulders humanly placed.

DISTINGUISHING HUMAN EMPLACEMENT

The difficulty arises in distinguishing the latter group from the second. On site I have been relying on 2 main factors

- (i) stones may be situated ~~within~~ within ~~structural~~ structures whose morphology means they must be humanly created; i.e. stones are within the fabric of the cairns construction forming distinct "courses" related to other stones.

- (ii) The stones are within a ~~matrix~~ matrix that is not a "natural" part of the soil horizon.

The rubble seems to be quite patchy and it is interesting that the coin has been located within a more stoney area. I don't think this is ~~because~~ necessarily because Bronze age people were aware of the rubble ~~that~~ in ~~an~~ in terms of its fullest extent in the way that we ~~are~~ are having excavated it. However, ~~in~~ several larger stones contained within the turf may well have been visible poking above the turfline in the Bronze Age as they are today and these would have comprised a noticeably denser concentration of stones.

The Bronze Age cairn builders deliberately selected a naturally stoney area ~~and~~ including ~~particular~~ large naturally occurring boulders ~~around which to build~~ the ~~within~~ for the location of the site.

LC597 Day (18) 11/6/97
Weather - Mist in morning fine in afternoon

On site - Justin + Helen (am). Gary, Mike
Helen (pm.)

In the morning Justin completed his plan and I continued to dig the "test trench." Sue and Eric came over ~~for~~ with some students to talk about the whole question of distinguishing between "natural" and "cultural" material on the site. ^{The whole nature/culture conundrum is} ~~to~~ ^{is} an interesting aspect of the Leskernick excavations. On site we spend a good deal of effort attempting to ascertain what is "natural" and what is "cultural" (by which we mean what is ~~necessarily~~ has been physically transported to, or repositioned ^{within} the site).

However, it is clear that the selection of ~~stones~~ large natural boulders as foundations for a cairn is equally a "cultural" act. The Bronze Age inhabitants of Leskernick Hill probably didn't understand nature and culture the

way that we do now.

Before Sue and Eric arrived Mike came and gave my site the once over. He agreed that the rubble was natural; as ~~indeed~~ he said, he had thought all along. Oh well, it's ~~an~~ ~~over~~ better to be safe than sorry ~~and~~ and treat ~~away~~ anything that looks like a feature as such until you are disproved, ~~at~~ least this way I have tested my ideas, (although I suspect Mike thinks I'm a bit of an idiot for following this course of action).

In the morning I found a flint flake in the leached, gritty part of the soil profile in the test trench. This is now special find Δ 1 - I took a level and co-ordinates and I shall now have to give this material a context no. = (8).

I set Gary + Mike to clearing (7) for a pre-ex photograph

LC597 Day (19) 12/6/97

Weather - Damp fog in the morning and late afternoon - otherwise cloudy but O.k.

On site - Gary, Mike + Helen

Peter Herring was on site today; he came to look at the cairn with Sue in the morning and with Chris Tilley in the just before hometime. ~~He~~ In the morning he was ~~quite~~ complimentary about the way we were grappling with the problem of "cultural vs natural" stones. However, by the afternoon, having trailed all over the hill with the settlement people ^(I survived O.k. though) he put me on the spot more - This is the part of being a supervisor that I find most challenging - justifying my interpretations. I ~~don't~~ suspect I have a tendency to make programmatic statements that ~~are simply~~ ^{are simply} the way I bounce possible narratives around. These statements may appear to be definite but they are not - I am well aware of how interpretations on site are always changing, and ~~are~~ ^{they}

the way contexts are understood before excavation is frequently very different to after they have been dug. This is ~~very~~ absolutely to be expected - digging is a process of discovery, and more information means ~~opinion~~ ideas change. I think in future I shall try to ^{sound} ~~be~~ less definite!

I spent the day digging the "test trench" down to ~~the~~ the natural so that I can get a good section through the soil horizons.

Gary + Mike cleared up context (7) for photo. New camera film was needed for B+W camera = This is film No. 7.

After talking with Sue ~~the~~ I decided to position my section in ^{such a} way that the sections can be fitted with those taken through (2) in past excavation, however I ~~also~~ also wanted to find out about a particular area

DAY 20 13-6-97 DAY OFF

DIARY ENDS